

You Need to Read This Page

Summer 2001

CAUTION: Scalding Water

Beautiful but deadly: Yellowstone's thermal features can kill you. Their waters are frequently near or above boiling. The crust surrounding them is thin and breaks easily, and often overlies more scalding water. People have died in these pools. Be safe, be careful—enjoy the thermal areas from a distance.

- **You must stay on boardwalks and designated trails.** They exist to protect you and to preserve delicate formations.
- Pets are prohibited in thermal areas.
- Swimming or bathing is prohibited in thermal pools or streams where water flows entirely from a thermal spring or pool.
- Where swimming is allowed, swim at your own risk. Thermal waters may contain organisms known to cause infections and/or amoebic meningitis, which can be quickly fatal. Obtain more information at any ranger station or visitor center.

Stay Away from Wildlife

Yellowstone is not a zoo and the animals are not tame, even though they may seem calm. Do not approach any wildlife. View them from the safety of your vehicle. **If an animal reacts to your presence, you are too close.**

Keep your distance and stay safe—and you will be rewarded by seeing more of an animal's natural behavior and activity.

Each year park visitors are injured by wildlife when they approach animals too closely. **You must stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other animals—including bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, wolves, coyotes.**

BISON are unpredictable and dangerous; they weigh up to 2,000 pounds (900 kg) and sprint 30 miles per hour (48 kph). Every year visitors are gored.

COYOTES quickly learn habits like roadside feeding. This may lead to aggressive behavior toward humans and can increase the risk of the coyote being poached or hit by a vehicle.

BEARS begin to come out of their dens in mid March. Be alert for tracks and sign; do not approach carcasses. Take all necessary precautions to avoid surprise encounters.

Page 7, "Hiking and Camping in Bear Country," provides important information on precautions and what to do if you encounter a bear.

If precautionary measures fail and you are charged by a bear, you can usually defuse the situation. Pepper spray is a good last line of defense; it has been effective in more than 90% of the reported cases where it has been used. Become familiar with your pepper spray, read all instructions, and know its limitations. Pepper spray must be instantly available, not in your pack. Remember, carrying pepper spray is not a substitute for vigilance and good safety precautions.

If you are injured by a bear (regardless of how minor), or if you observe a bear or bear sign, report it to a park ranger as soon as possible. Someone's safety may depend on it.

Avoid These Situations

Your visit may be marred by tragedy if you violate park rules. Law enforcement rangers strictly enforce park regulations to protect you and the park. Please help keep our contacts with you positive by obeying park regulations and avoiding these problems:

- speeding (radar enforced)
- driving while intoxicated (open container law enforced)
- traveling off-road by vehicle or bicycle
- improperly storing food
- violating camping regulations & rules
- having pets off leash or on trails and boardwalks
- littering
- swimming in thermal pools
- traveling off boardwalks in thermal areas
- removing or possessing natural (flowers, antlers, etc.) or cultural (artifacts) features
- feeding or approaching wildlife
- spotlighting (viewing animals with artificial light)
- calling in elk by imitating bugles or using buglers
- violating fishing regulations
- not removing detachable side mirrors when not pulling trailers

Violations of park regulations can result in a fine and/or court appearance.

Attention Anglers & Boaters

Yellowstone National Park's general fishing season opens the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend and closes the first Sunday in November. Other dates apply for Yellowstone Lake and its tributaries, see page 6 or consult the park fishing regulations. Boats and float tubes require permits; see page 6.

Backcountry Permits

Permits are required for **overnight backcountry use** and may be obtained in person up to 48 hours in advance from any ranger station. Rangers will provide information on weather, trails and other conditions. See page 7 for more information.

Bicycling

Please wear safety gear, including helmet and high visibility clothing. Park roads are narrow and winding with few shoulders, and no bicycle paths exist along them. In spring, high snowbanks make travel more dangerous. Road elevations range from 5,300 to 8,860 feet (1,615–2,700 m); long distances exist between services and facilities. Bicycling is permitted on established public roads, parking areas, and designated routes. Bicycles are prohibited on backcountry trails and boardwalks.

Motorists frequently do not see bicyclists or fail to give them sufficient space on the road. Drivers sometimes pass on hill crests, blind curves or in oncoming traffic. Vehicles, especially motor homes or those towing trailers, may have wide mirrors, posing an additional hazard. For more information about bicycling in Yellowstone, inquire at a visitor center.

Falling Trees

Avoid areas with large numbers of dead trees (snags), which may suddenly fall—especially on windy days.

High Altitude

Most of the park is above 7,500 feet (2,275 m). Allow time to acclimate and drink plenty of liquids. Be aware of your physical limitations. Don't overexert; drink plenty of water to forestall the dehydrating effects of the park's dry climate. Stop and rest frequently.

Pets

Pets must be leashed. They are prohibited on all trails, in the backcountry, and in thermal basins. Pets are not allowed more than 100 feet from a road or parking area. Leaving a pet unattended and/or tied to an object is prohibited.

Picnic Areas

Overnight camping is not allowed in the park's picnic areas. Fires may be built only in fire grates available in picnic areas at Snake River, Grant Village, Bridge Bay, Cascade, Norris Meadows, Yellowstone River, Spring Creek, Nez Perce, and the east parking lot of Old Faithful. Liquid or gas fuel stoves or self-contained charcoal grills may be used for cooking at all locations. Most picnic areas have pit toilets, but none have drinking water.

Stream Crossing

High water conditions persist into summer. If your plans include fishing or following trails that cross streams, check at local ranger stations for current stream conditions.

Theft

Lock your vehicle; keep all valuables out of sight; label all valuable property with your name, address, or identification number; report theft or vandalism to a ranger.

Traffic

Yellowstone has more than 350 miles (564 km) of roads. Most are narrow, rough, and busy. Some sections are steep with sharp drop-offs. Drive cautiously and courteously; **slow moving vehicles must use pullouts to observe wildlife or scenery and to allow safe passing by other vehicles.** Watch for animals on the road, especially at night.

Bicycles and motorcycles present special hazards. Drive defensively and wear seat belts. **Yellowstone has a mandatory seat belt requirement for all passengers.** Be especially cautious of ice and road damage; cool temperatures may occur any time of the year. **The maximum speed limit is 45 mph (73 km per hour)** or slower as posted.

Weapons

No firearms or weapons, including state-permitted concealed weapons, are allowed in Yellowstone. However, unloaded firearms may be transported in a vehicle when the weapon is cased, broken down or rendered inoperable, and kept out of sight. Ammunition must be placed in a separate compartment of the vehicle.

Emergency: dial 911 • Park Information: 307-344-7381